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he is permitted to marry:[1] although many remain single until they have undergone these various rites, it is considered almost as binding on those who marry before doing so, to comply with these time-honoured usages at some early opportunity.

Marriage.—1. It has been asserted that the "communal marriage,"[2] system prevails among them, and that "marriage is nothing more than taking a female slave,"[3] but so far from the contract being regarded as a merely temporary arrangement, to be set aside at the will of either party, no incompatibility of temper or other cause is allowed to dissolve the union, and, while bigamy, polygamy, polyandry, and divorce are unknown, conjugal fidelity till death is not the exception, but the rule, and matrimonial differences, which, however, occur but rarely, are easily settled with or without the intervention of friends.

2. It is undoubtedly true that breaches of morality have occasionally taken place among a few of the married persons who have resided for any length of time at Port Blair, but this is only what might be expected from constant association with the Indian convict attendants at the various homes; justice, however, demands that in judging of their moral characteristics we should consider those only who have been uninfluenced by the vices or virtues of alien races.

3. As in various other savage tribes, unchastity[4] is apparently universal among the unmarried of both sexes, and is indeed so entirely disregarded that no reproof is administered, even by the nearest relatives, to those who offend in this manner; notwithstanding this laxity, the girls are strikingly modest and child-like in their demeanour, and when married are good wives and models of constancy, while their husbands do not fall far short of them in this respect. It should, however, be mentioned, that the freedom which exists between the sexes prior to wedlock, is confined to those who are not within the prescribed limits of affinity, as their customs do not permit of the union of any who are known to be even distantly related;[5] the fact of our allowing first cousins to marry seems to them highly objection-

[1] They think highly of a man who defers marriage until he is of full age, and the reverse of a youngster who rushes into matrimony before attaining the mature (!) age of eighteen.

[2] "So absolutely closely allied are the Andaman Islanders in their moral as well as physical life to the lower animals, that it is said by an eminent scientific voyager (Sir Edward Belcher) that the man and woman remain together until the mother ceases to suckle the child, after which they separate as a matter of course, and each seeks a new partner" (Brown).

[3] *Vide* Wood.

[4] "A great many races of mankind are quite indifferent to juvenile unchastity, and only impose strict conduct on their women after marriage" (Peschel).

[5] "It is precisely nations in the most primitive stage which have the greatest abhorrence of incestuous marriages" (Peschel).

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835 836 able and immoral, which is turning the tables on us with a vengeance.[1]

836 584 4. In consequence of the lax code of morality prevailing among the unmarried, it not unfrequently happens that a marriage is brought about by the circumstance of the young woman being found *enceinte*. When this is the case, the guardians ascertain from her companions or herself who is the cause of her being in such a condition, and, whether it is an easy matter or not to decide this question with certainty, there never appears to be any difficulty in persuading the youth whom she names as her lover to become her husband. It thus happens that children are very rarely born out of wedlock.

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584 5. Parents and foster-parents have the power of betrothing their children in infancy, and though subsequently, during childhood, they may be parted, the contract must be fulfilled soon after they attain a marriageable age; it is even alleged that, like the Yorubas,[2] the Andamanese look upon a girl betrothed by her parents as so far a wife that with her prematrimonial unfaithfulness is accounted a crime.

6. As soon as the betrothal has been agreed upon, the girl is taken to the hut of her future father-in-law, or foster father-in-law, and the children remain together for several months, in order that the fact of their engagement may become generally known; after this the girl returns to her old home, or is adopted by one of her father's friends. Should either of the betrothed pair die young, the survivor is not called upon to take any part at the obsequies, and is at liberty to form another alliance.

607 7. Until a man attains middle age he evinces great shyness in the presence of the wife of a *younger* brother or cousin, and the feeling is invariably reciprocated; it is, however, otherwise in the case of the elder brother's (or cousin's) wife, who, moreover, should she be many years his senior, receives from him much of the respect accorded to a mother. In the first of the above cases all communications are made through a third person, though under no circumstances would marriage be permissible between them; while in the latter it is almost obligatory, unless the disparity between the ages be very great.

584 8. It is not customary for lovers to intimate their desire of being married, but it is the duty of the guardian, or, in the case of widows and widowers, of the chief of the community, to

[1] On reference to Appendix I. it will be found that the terms which are used to denote *half-brother* and *half-sister*, are also employed to denote *male* and *female cousins*, showing how close they regard the relationship.

[2] Farrer's "Primitive Manners and Customs," p. 201.